

EAST CENTRAL STATES BUREAU

MRS. E. L. ALBRIGHT, BUREAU SECRETARY

THE question is asked, What are the schools and homes in the East Central States doing for the evolution of the Negro? We answer with full assurance that, because of their influence, the best types of men and women of the Negro race are in the making. The work of this Bureau is not confined to women and girls, for in these schools boys and young men enjoy equal privileges.

The work at Asheville, North Carolina, begun by Dr. L. M. Pease, the noted founder of the Five Points Mission of New York, and carried on, under his direction, in a remodeled livery stable, consisted of an ungraded school of both sexes and all ages, whose mental, moral, and religious faculties were of the most primitive and undeveloped type. This school property, with a teacher's cottage, was transferred to us by Dr. Pease as a gift; and the generous donor lived to see how, under the care of our Society, the livery stable gave place to the spacious Allen Home, and the heterogeneous school to the well-graded academy and industrial school.

During the years in which these external improvements have been made greater changes have taken place in the mental and spiritual condition of the hundreds of boys and girls under instruction in the classes ranging from primary to academic. Its boys, manly and intelligent, are eligible to the best places of employment in the city and vicinity. Two of the girl graduates have been employed as teachers by our Society. Several others are teachers in the mission schools of other denominations. Some are teachers in the public schools of the city; and scores of them have been teachers in the country schools. Miss Dole, the superintendent, who has remained here through all these years of improvement, thoroughly understands the

colored race, its deficiencies and its possibilities, and how to overcome the one and achieve the other. The atmosphere of the home is refined and cultured, and the religious life of the girls is kept sane and strong. In the school the most modern methods are employed, and the pupils respond to these readily, as they do also to the work in the sewing and cooking classes. As a rule, every room and bed in the Home is occupied, and the school building is so crowded that many more than can be seated must be received.

The work at Camden, South Carolina, like that of Asheville, was begun before the organization of our Society, and came to us by transfer from Mrs. Sarah Mather. At that time the property consisted of the school building which is still in use, and the Home, which has been considerably enlarged. Since then we have added Babcock Chapel, which has on the first floor an audience room seating three hundred and fifty, and above, dormitory accommodations for about twenty-five. We have also an industrial building which, with its equipment, greatly facilitates the work in the industrial classes. For a number of years we have had from sixty to seventy girls in the Home, and about two hundred and twenty-five boys and girls and young men and women in the Academy. Of the remarkable corps of New England women who cared for this work for many years, Miss Russell alone remains, her service here covering a period of twenty years. Thoroughly intelligent, and so alert and watchful that no deficiency in mind or manner escapes her notice, she has directed the school with remarkable efficiency, considering that the pupils are, perhaps, the crudest of all who enter our schools. The majority come to us direct from the plantations and the cotton fields; but with the faithful work of our teachers and the influence of the life in the Home, they soon reach a most satisfactory condition of knowledge and culture. For a number of years we have usually had as many as three of our graduates as assistant teachers. More than a hundred girls each

year are in the sewing classes, and work is done that would be creditable to any city establishment.

A few years ago, coming out from the city of Camden, on a railway train, a southern gentleman, none too friendly to the Negro race, called my attention to a farm so well kept that it would have done credit to any wealthy, northern farmer, saying, "That farm, with another like it and a good store in the city, belongs to a colored man, who is altogether the leading colored man of the State." He did not know that but a few days before this same colored man, standing on the porch of Browning Home, had said to me, "All that I have or am I owe to the New England women who came here after the war and opened this school." He is to-day not only a safe leader for his own race but also a citizen welcome in counsel with the white men of his own city.

Several of our men graduates have taken civil service examinations and are in government employ. Some are in railway offices and others have entered the law. The large majority of our girl graduates are teachers in this and other southern States.

Connected with this work are the plantation schools at Ephesus and Wesley. Much of the country along the Wateree River is still held as large plantations, and hundreds of Negroes employed are isolated here. At my first visit to Ephesus I found the old church of slavery time, windows barred with planks, roof partly gone, floor decayed, and open door through which two little girls were sweeping the dirt with a bundle of brush. Inside was a little company of girls seated on rough benches without backs, around the body of a stove propped on bits of brick. Here they waited for the sewing lesson, and, as their clumsy fingers tried to follow the instruction of our teacher, they were learning to recite the Psalms and the multiplication table. Since that day a change has come. Stimulated by teaching received along all lines, and helped directly and indirectly by our Society, the people have built a good

frame structure, whose bright carpets show that the brush broom has been banished. They have now church and Sunday school, with the usual officers who do their work intelligently. The Sunday school has about one hundred in attendance, taught by our teachers and our graduates who live on the plantation. One of the graduates is organist.

A similar work is going on in connection with Wesley Church, about equally distant from Camden in another direction. This church has nearly five hundred members, and on special occasions such as quarterly meetings, often has an attendance of a thousand persons in the church and the surrounding forest. The people come from miles away with their baskets of lunch and spend the day; so that this becomes a center of interest and offers a great opportunity for instruction in right lines of living and worship. In the Sunday school one of our teachers instructs the women and girls, and another has a class of boys, young men, and fourteen of the older men of the church who are class leaders, exhorters, and local preachers. Through the latter other churches are receiving the benefit of this theological school in the forest. That there is some need of instruction can be judged from the wish expressed by a pastor for his teachers: "May the superintendent's cabinet be airtight, and may they stand as the stars on the brow of the eagle." As a result of our work in this school, twelve boys and girls are walking daily from seven to eight miles to be in the school at Camden. Though there is still ignorance and spiritual need, there is yet great progress and much spiritual growth, and the workers in this Bureau see the oncoming light.

WOMAN'S HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

150 Fifth Avenue, New York City

50 or less, 6c.; 50 to 100, 10c.